

Management Areas in Revised Forest Plans

(excerpt from Chapter 2 of the final EIS)

Some of the MAs in the revised Forest Plans have not changed from the current Plans. The management direction for the following MAs have not changed substantially from the current Plans:

- Pristine Wilderness
- Primitive Wilderness
- Semi-primitive Non-motorized Wilderness
- Semi-primitive Motorized Wilderness
- Eligible Wild, Scenic, and Recreational Rivers
- Experimental Forest
- Research Natural Areas

The following is a brief description of each MA. Each MA has a different mix of resource uses. The descriptions here only highlight the predominant use in the MA and list the multiple uses of each MA. The emphasis in each area is not an exclusive use. ***A detailed description and desired condition for each MA can be found in Chapter 3 of the Revised Forest Plans.***

General Forest Emphasis

There are two management areas with a general forest emphasis: General Forest MA and General Forest - Longer Rotation MA. The amount of land in the general forest areas is plentiful in most alternatives because it includes the broadest variety of uses. These areas are managed to maintain ecosystem integrity while providing a variety of sustainable economic and social uses and values. Management emphasizes maintaining a variety of vegetative communities, age classes, and habitats that are appropriate within landscape ecosystems. These areas are also managed for forest products, and occasionally there is a moderate to high level of human interaction on the landscape.

Timber management is one of the primary activities in these MAs. When trees are harvested, they provide commercial pulpwood, sawtimber, and fiber at sustainable levels. Other wood products are also available, such as firewood and boughs. Items that are traditionally gathered, including birch bark and pinecones, are available within these MAs.

Other activities, such as recreation, are also featured in these two MAs. A wide variety of recreation opportunities is provided. Examples include hunting, recreation motor vehicle use, hiking, camping, and water-based recreation. Some roads and developed recreation facilities are present, such as campgrounds and trails. Higher maintenance level roads that are developed for forest management activities would likely stay open for public use.

Recreational activities occur in natural-appearing forest surroundings that are modified by forest management activities. The visual effects of timber management are often noticeable and may sometimes dominate the landscape. The landscape is diverse with a combination of continuous canopy, open canopy, and areas of young regenerating forest. Openings are shaped to follow natural landforms or features, with sizes typically ranging from 10 to 100 acres and occasionally up to 1,000 acres.

General Forest MA

The range of rotation ages for each forest type is determined by the objectives for landscape ecosystems (see Chapter 3 of the revised Forest Plans). In the General Forest MA, timber harvest occurs at all rotation ages within the range set by the landscape ecosystem objectives.

Forest vegetation communities are managed with practices that mimic ecosystem processes, mainly stand replacement disturbance. A full range of silvicultural practices is used. However, compared to the General Forest - Longer Rotation MA, there is more clearcutting.

Management activities generally create young, even-aged forests. A mosaic of young to mature (1-150 years) trees dominates these areas. Compared to other MAs, there will be the most young forest and the largest sized timber harvest units.

Management-ignited fire is used primarily to prepare sites for regenerating new forests and to reduce woody fuel that could cause wildfires.

General Forest - Longer Rotation MA

In the General Forest - Longer Rotation MA, final harvest occurs more often at extended rotation ages than at minimum rotation ages for some forest types. The range of rotation ages for each forest type is determined by the management objectives for each landscape ecosystem (see Chapter 2 of the revised Forest Plans).

Forest vegetation communities are managed with practices that mimic both stand replacement disturbance and less severe stand maintenance disturbance. A full range of silvicultural practices is employed. However, compared to the General Forest MA, there is more partial cutting. When clearcutting is used in the General Forest - Longer Rotation MA, it would generally be at an extended rotation age.

Management activities leave both young, even-aged and older, multi-aged forests on the landscape. A mosaic of young to old (1-250 years) trees dominates these areas.

Management-ignited fire is used to mimic natural disturbances on the landscape to maintain vegetation communities. Fire is also used as a tool to prepare sites for regenerating new forests and to reduce woody fuel that could cause wildfires.

Compared to the General Forest MA, forest management activities in the General Forest - Longer Rotation MA would generally be less noticeable to visitors.

Recreation and Scenic Emphasis

Two management areas emphasize recreation and scenic resources:

- Recreation Use in a Scenic Landscape MA
- Eligible Scenic River (Chippewa NF) and Eligible Wild, Scenic, and Recreational River (Superior NF) MAs

Concentrated recreation use is primarily emphasized in these areas. Facilities and access may be highly developed, resulting in a high degree of user interaction. There may be paved roads and buildings. These areas provide many recreational facilities, including day use areas, resorts, visitor centers, trails, and camping at developed campgrounds.

Ecosystems are managed to provide a predominantly natural-appearing landscape that may be slightly modified by forest management activities. These areas emphasize a large tree and old forest character. Management activities, such as road construction, enhance recreation and aesthetic objectives, such as vistas, and may be noticeable to visitors. Timber harvest, management-ignited fire, tree planting, and other management techniques may be used to meet recreation and scenic resource objectives.

Recreation Use in a Scenic Landscape MA

Low- to high-density recreation occurs in these large geographic areas. Viewsheds are managed for scenic beauty and big-tree character. Generally, these areas offer a natural-appearing forest setting with some facility and trail development and roads for recreation. These area also provide wildlife habitat to enhance opportunities for watching wildlife.

Eligible Scenic River MA (CNF) and Eligible Wild, Scenic, and Recreational Rivers MA (SNF)

These areas provide for the interim protection of river corridors identified as Wild, Scenic, or Recreational River candidates. Under the interim protection, management works toward maintaining the outstanding values of the river corridors. Areas are managed as a range of settings from primitive to developed recreation areas, depending on the potential river designation.

Semi-primitive Recreation Emphasis

Three management areas emphasize semi-primitive recreation:

- Semi-primitive Non-motorized Recreation MA
- Semi-primitive Motorized Recreation MA

These areas provide opportunities for low-density, undeveloped recreation. Examples include: walking, hiking, cross-country skiing, snowshoeing, trail running, canoeing, fishing, and horseback riding. The motorized areas also provide trail-riding opportunities for recreation motor vehicle (RMV) use.

Recreational activities occur in natural-appearing environments that may be slightly modified by forest management activities. Interaction among recreational users is low, but there is often evidence of other users.

Management activities in these areas enhance recreation and scenic objectives and may be occasionally noticeable to visitors. These management activities may include developing primitive campsites, harvesting timber, using management-ignited fire, and planting trees.

Ecosystems are managed to provide a predominantly natural-appearing landscape, generally emphasizing large trees and older forest with a continuous forest canopy.

Semi-primitive Motorized Recreation MA

This MA emphasizes land and resource conditions that provide recreational opportunities in nearly primitive surroundings where motorized use is allowed. Most recreation use occurs on lakes, trails, portages, and low standard roads.

Semi-primitive Non-motorized Recreation MA

This MA emphasizes land and resource conditions that provide recreational opportunities in nearly primitive surroundings where motorized use is not allowed. Most of the non-motorized recreation use occurs on lakes, trails, portages, and low standard roads.

Conservation and Special Features Emphasis

Four management areas emphasize conservation and special features:

- Unique Biological MA and Unique Biological, Geological, or Historical Areas MA
- Special Management Complexes MA
- Minimum Management Natural Areas MA
- Riparian Emphasis Areas MA.

Management in these areas focuses on conserving special social or ecological features of the Forest. Management is generally limited but sometimes evident. Timber harvest and other activities may be allowed if needed to achieve the objectives of the area.

Recreation and access opportunities, values, and benefits are different in each MA.

Recreation activities occur in a range of surroundings from a natural-appearing forest setting with minimal development and human modification to highly developed recreation settings.

Unique Biological MA (SNF) and Unique Biological, Aquatic, Geological, or Historical Areas MA (CNF)

Unique biological, aquatic geological, or historical areas are preserved, including a National Natural Landmark on the Superior National Forest. In some areas, the focus is on interpreting features. Recreation facilities are provided only when needed to interpret or protect the resource. Dispersed recreation occurs but may be discouraged.

Riparian Emphasis Areas MA

This MA emphasizes riparian values and functions. Riparian resources are restored, protected, and enhanced in areas where ecosystem processes are sensitive to degradation. Dispersed recreation activities occur in semi-primitive settings. There may also be highly developed campgrounds and trails in natural-appearing surroundings that are somewhat modified by forest management activities.

Research Emphasis

Three management areas emphasize research:

- Experimental Forests MA
- Research Natural Areas MA (existing)
- Potential Research Natural Areas MA.

Experimental Forests MA

These areas are formally designated as Experimental Forests. The focus is on researching vegetation management techniques. Timber products are incidental to the primary objective. Generally no developed recreation facilities will be provided. Dispersed recreation use occurs but is generally discouraged.

Research Natural Areas MA

These areas are the existing formally designated Research Natural Areas (RNA). The focus is on preserving and maintaining areas for ecological research, observation, genetic conservation, monitoring, and educational activities. Forests are not managed for timber products, and harvesting is not allowed. No recreation facilities are provided. Dispersed recreation use occurs but is generally discouraged.

Candidate Research Natural Areas MA

These areas are recommended to be Research Natural Areas. They will be managed similarly to Research Natural Areas until they are formally designated as Research Natural Areas.

Wilderness Emphasis

Five management areas emphasize wilderness:

- Pristine Wilderness MA
- Primitive Wilderness MA
- Semi-primitive Non-motorized Wilderness MA
- Semi-primitive Motorized Wilderness MA
- Wilderness Study Areas MA

Wilderness MAs are federally designated wilderness or areas that have been recommended for wilderness study designations.

Ecosystems are managed to allow ecological processes such as fire, insects, and disease to operate relatively free from human influence. Diverse landscapes result from naturally occurring succession and natural disturbance. Vegetation is managed only to protect wilderness values or to protect adjacent property from fire or pests.

Pristine Wilderness MA

These areas are non-motorized where activities of contemporary humans are not noticeable. Trails, portages, and campsites are not constructed or maintained. Visitors rarely encounter each other.

Primitive Wilderness MA

These areas are non-motorized and away from main travel routes, but activities of contemporary humans are somewhat noticeable. Campsites have latrines and firegrates. Portages and trails are maintained. Visitors infrequently encounter each other.

Semi-primitive Non-motorized Wilderness MA

These are non-motorized areas near main travel routes. Campsites have latrines and firegrates. Portages and trails are constructed and maintained but are on main travel routes. Visitors encounter each other with moderate frequency.

Semi-primitive Motorized Wilderness MA

Based on the BWCA Act, these are the only places where motorized watercraft are permitted in wilderness. Campsites have latrines and firegrates. Portages and trails are constructed and maintained and are along main travel routes. The frequency of encounters with others is moderate to high.

